A Young L2 Learner's Sociopragmatic Awareness Compared with L1 English Speakers

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1. Introduction

As shown in extensive reviews by Bardovi-Harlig (2001) and Kasper and Rose (2002), there has been a growing body of research on production and comprehension in interalnaguage pragmatics both in longitudinal studies and cross-sectional studies. However, studies on pragmatic awareness are scarce, especially in young L2 learners.

Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) distinguished two components of pragmatics. One is pragmaliguistics, which refers to "the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech, 1983, p. 11). The other is sociopragmatics, "the sociological interface of pragmatics" (Leech, 1983, p. 10) which is further elaborated by Kasper & Rose (2001) as "the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action" (p. 2). My focus in this paper is on the latter, sociopragmatics, in particular on sociopragmatic awareness.

Rose (2000, 2009) led two relevant studies in this area. Using a cartoon oral-production task in a cross-sectional study, Rose (2000) investigated interlanguage pragmatic development of requests, apologies and compliment responses in Cantonese primary school learners of English (ages 7, 9 and 11) in Hong Kong. He found that there were some development in terms of

pragmalinguistics, but there was little evidence of sociopragmatic development. In 2009, Rose suggested "the precedence of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics in the early stages of pragmatic development in a second/foreign language" (p. 2346). In Rose (2009), an extension of the previous study, participants were Cantonese secondary school learners of English (ages 13, 15, 17) in Hong Kong. To elicit requests, he used a discourse completion task (DCT) (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989). This was done orally, not in writing which is normally the case with DCT. As in Rose (2000), this study indicated ample evidence of pragmalingustic development but a lack in sociopragmatic awareness.

At the university level, Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) investigated pragmatic awareness in 43 ESL students from 18 different language backgrounds enrolled in an intensive English program at an American university. After the students identified pragmatic infelicities in video-taped scenarios, they performed role plays in pairs to repair those infelicities. The results from the role plays indicated that students were able to notice what was missing. For instance, they provided explanations for requesting, but the form and contents of repairs were somewhat different from target-like norms. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin suggested that students could benefit from pragmatic awareness raising classroom activities to have pragmatic competence of a target language.

Achiba (2008) examined sociopragmatic awareness of 91 first-year students in a Japanese university whose English level was Grade Pre-2[1] and above in *the EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency*, one of the most widely administered English tests in Japan. DCT was used to elicit requests, and four request scenarios were made according to relative power of speakers and

[1] Grade Pre-2 in the *EIKEN* is equivalent to TOEFL PBT 400 and iBT 32 (http://stepeiken.org/comparison-table).

hearers (i.e., student to teacher, friend to friend) and degree of imposition (i.e., high and low). The results were compared with those of 19 L1 speakers of Australian English who were students at an Australian university. The findings showed striking differences between these two groups. Australian students did not use direct strategies in any of the scenarios but various indirect strategies according to the context. Japanese students, on the other hand, exhibited little variation in context. About 40% of all the strategies this latter group used were direct, and imperatives with *please* were predominant in all but one scenario (i.e., student to teacher with high imposition) where two thirds used indirect strategies.

The review of above studies shows that learners in foreign language environments lack sensitivity to situational variation whether they are students of primary school, secondary school or university. Achiba (2012) noted that opportunities for language learning arise as a learner participates in real-time social interaction. Unlike learners in a foreign language environment, learners in a second-language environment are in an acquisition-rich environment where there are ample opportunities for real-time social interaction. ESL university students in Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) developed a certain degree of sociopragmatic knowledge and awareness but their actual performance was different from that of native speakers of the target language.

What about primary school learners in a second language environment, then? The study explores sociopragmatic awareness in a Japanese ESL learner in an Australian primary school. Specifically it attempts to address the following questions:

1. To what extent is the learner's sociopragmatic awareness similar to that of her L1 English-speaking classmates?
2. Is there evidence of the learner's sociopragmatic awareness at the end

of the17-month observation period?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The study explores sociopragmatic awareness in a female Japanese ESL learner, Sachiko who was 7 years, 2 months old when she started a sojourn with her mother, the author in an L2 environment, Melbourne, Australia. Data collection for this study was carried out when she was 8 years, 7 months old, seventeen months after her arrival.

Sachiko's 51 classmates also participated in the study. Results from the questionnaire indicated four students either did not answer or their responses were unintelligible. These four were excluded from the data set. All the classes in the local school Sachiko attended were composed of two different graders. Sachiko was in a composite of third and fourth graders when she was a third grader at the time of the data collection. Out of the 47 classmates 24 were in the third grade and 23 were in the fourth; there were 19 boys and 28 girls.

Adult L1 speakers of Australian English were also included in one analysis. There were 27 (F＝15; M＝11; no response＝1) participants. Out of those, 4 lived in Japan and 23 were in Melbourne. They ranged in age from 20s to 60s with the majority in their 30s, 40s and 50s. The reason for including Australian adults for this analysis is not to determine in detail how exactly L1 children and the L2 child are different from or similar to the adults in the perception of politeness, but to have some idea how Australian adults perceive politeness. This would help to understand Sachiko's perception of it, since Sachiko was in an environment where she had input from adults who spoke Australian English as well as ample opportunities for interaction with her classmates.

All the names in the data, including Sachiko, are pseudonyms.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

In order to explore the L2 child's sociopragmatic awareness, in the first analysis, Sachiko's choices of request strategies in terms of politeness were compared with those of her classmates and Australian adults. A questionnaire was given to Australian adults, Sachiko and her classmates and they were asked to rank the following seven utterances in order of politeness from the most polite (1) to the least polite (7):

Would you mind helping me?
Could you please help me?
Can you please help me?
Could you help me?
Can you help me?
Help me please.
Help me.

In the questionnaire the above utterances were jumbled. See Appendix A for the questionnaire used with the adults. Appendix B is the questionnaire used with Sachiko and her classmates, and it includes Sachiko's written responses.

For the second analysis, another questionnaire was given to Sachiko and her classmates. See Appendix C for the questionnaire with Sachiko's written responses. The questionnaire had two scenarios with four different interlocutors: Sachiko and her classmates were asked to write down in the space on the questionnaire what they would say to their teachers, their friends' mothers, their own mothers and their friends when they want to ask for a pencil and when they want each interlocutor to pass a book. Contextual variables included in the scenarios were all relevant to them. I regularly visited Sachiko's class for audio-recording for other research purposes. In the school

Sachiko was enrolled at, students brought neither their textbooks nor pencils. These were on large tables which students sat at and were shared by all students. Therefore, they often requested for them from each other as well as from their teachers. At home, it can be safely assumed that they had opportunities for making requests to their mothers. As for their friend's mothers, students had many opportunities to interact with them, since the students often visited their friends' homes after school to play and mothers often took turns to pick up their children from school. All the interlocutors were familiar to the students and the two requests had low imposition; the only difference was status.

Data collection from adult Australians was carried out both online and on paper. Questionnaires to Sachiko and her classmates were given by me in their classroom and students completed them there.

There are some limitations with the questionnaires in this study. First, requests do not occur without situations and in any given situations, several factors (e.g., familiarity, power relationships, imposition) interact with each other. The questionnaire (ranking politeness) used for the first analysis did not include that information.

Secondly, since the questionnaire used for the second analysis had the same requests for goods (pencil) and action (passing a book) for all the interlocutors, there was a risk that the students might have been compelled to change their utterances according to different interlocutors.

Based on the analytical framework of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), responses in the questionnaire were coded for three major levels of directness (direct, conventionally indirect and hints), subtypes of conventional indirect strategies, perspectives, and the use of *please*. These features were chosen for analysis because they were present in the data.

Finally, there was an informal follow-up interview with Sachiko two weeks after the questionnaire had been administered. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview did not only clarify and explain her responses, but also was a very important source to find her socio-pragmatic awareness of L2 requests. Excerpts from the interview are included in the results and discussion sections whenever relevant. The interview was completed in Japanese but excerpts are translated in English as a convenience.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Ranking strategies in terms of politeness

Table 1 (See p. 248) displays the rank-ordered distribution of request strategies in terms of politeness by Australian adults, Sachiko and her classmates. From Table 1, the first three most frequently mentioned strategies for each rank are extracted and presented in Table 2 (See p. 249).

Overall, for Australian adults, *Could you please help me*, *Would you mind helping me* and *Can you please help me* were ranked as the first three most polite strategies and *Help me* was the least polite. *Could you help me*, *Can you help me* and *Help me, please* fell between the two. These results were similar to those of Sachiko and her classmates, although about specifics there were some dissimilarities among them.

The following are specifics of similarities and differences that emerged from the results.

The same choices of rank by the adults, the classmates and Sachiko:

1. *Coud you help me* was the fourth most polite strategy for Australian adults (37.0%), the classmates (31.9%) and Sachiko.
2. *Help me* was ranked as the least polite strategy by the adults (96.3%), classmates (93.6) and Sachiko.

The same choices of rank by the adults and Sachiko:

1. *Could you please help me* was ranked as the second most polite strategy by the adults (48.1%) and Sachiko, while the classmates ranked *Can you please help me* as the second (44.7%).
2. *Can you please help me* was ranked as the third most polite strategy by the adults (44.4%) and Sachiko, while the classmates ranked *Would you mind helping me* as the third (23.4%).

Different choices of rank by Sachiko from the adults and the classmates:

1. *Could you please help me* was ranked as the most polite strategy by both the adults (48.1%, the same frequency as the second) and the classmates (46.8), while Sachiko ranked *Would you mind helping me* as the most polite.
2. Both the adults and the classmates ranked *Can you help me* as the fifth in the rank, (adult, 55.6%; classmates, 44.7%) and *Help me please* as the sixth (adult, 51.9%; classmates, 48.9%). For Sachiko these were reversed.

It is interesting to note that Sachiko's choices of ranks 2 and 3 are the same as those of the adults rather than her classmates. A possible reason for this is that she observed closely how adults interacted with each other and that language behaviors of adults around her might have become very salient to her, although Sachiko had far more opportunities to interact with her peers than with adults.

This explanation leads to Sachiko's choice of *Would you mind helping me* as the most polite strategy rather than *Could you please help me* which the adults and the classmates chose. The following is the excerpt in the follow-up interview which focused on her rating of *Would you mind helping me*:

Excerpt 1 (Follow-up interview)

M (Mother): To whom would you say "Would you mind helping me?"

S (Sachiko): I never use it. When I want to be very polite, I normally say "Could you please help me?" But I've heard people say, "Would you mind...?" For example, I've heard you say that to Jessie. So I think "Would you mind helping me?" is the most polite.

Jessie was one of our adult neighbors. Sachiko seemed to be very observant and aware of what was going on around her. The utterances used in interactions between adults including myself may have been salient to her. In fact, when everything is equal (i.e., imposition, familiarity, power relationship, etc.), I would rank *Would you mind helping me* as the most polite strategy, and I had used *Would you mind* when I sometimes went to Jessie to request something. Sachiko's ranking *Would you mind helping me* as the most polite strategy may have been influenced by my use of English as well as other adults' use of it.

I gave the same questionnaire which I had used with the adult native speakers of Australian English to a second group, 24 adult native speakers of varieties of English, including New Zealand English, American English, British English, and Canadian English. Results from this questionnaire are not included in the analysis but it is worth noting that 20 out of the 24 respondents ranked *Would you mind helping me* as the most polite. As Blum-Kulka and House (1989) suggested, there appear to be cultural variations in politeness in request behaviors. However, due to the limited number of participants, we cannot be sure whether or not Australian adults' highest rating for politeness (i.e., *Could you please help me*) showed cultural differences. Australian adults ranked *Could you please help me* as the most polite as well as the second most polite in the rank. The frequencies for both were the same (48.1%). It could be

Table 1 Rank-ordered distribution of request strategies

Request strategies	Participants		Rank 1[a]	2	3	4	5	6	7[b]	Total
Would you mind helping me?	Adults	n (%)	9 (33.3)	4 (14.8)	11 (40.7)	3 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	27 (99.9)
	Classmates	n (%)	13 (27.7)	8 (17.0)	11 (23.4)	10 (21.3)	1 (2.1)	2 (4.3)	2 (4.3)	47 (100.1)
	Sachiko		S[c]							
Could you please help me?	Adults	n (%)	13 (48.1)	13 (48.1)	1 (3.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	27 (99.9)
	Classmates	n (%)	22 (46.8)	13 (27.7)	9 (19.1)	2 (4.3)	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
	Sachiko			S						
Can you please help me?	Adults	n (%)	4 (14.8)	9 (33.3)	12 (44.4)	1 (3.7)	1 (3.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	27 (99.9)
	Classmates	n (%)	9 (19.1)	21 (44.7)	9 (19.1)	4 (8.5)	3 (6.4)	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	47 (99.9)
	Sachiko				S					
Could you help me?	Adults	n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (7.4)	10 (37.0)	9 (33.3)	5 (18.5)	1 (3.7)	27 (99.9)
	Classmates	n (%)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.3)	7 (14.9)	15 (31.9)	18 (38.3)	5 (10.6)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
	Sachiko					S				
Can you help me?	Adults	n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (14.8)	15 (55.6)	8 (29.6)	0 (0.0)	27 (100.0)
	Classmates	n (%)	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	4 (8.5)	4 (8.5)	21 (44.7)	16 (34.0)	1 (2.1)	47 (99.9)
	Sachiko							S		
Help me please.	Adults	n (%)	1 (3.7)	1 (3.7)	1 (3.7)	9 (33.3)	1 (3.7)	14 (51.9)	0 (0.0)	27 (100.0)
	Classmates	n (%)	2 (4.3)	3 (6.4)	7 (14.9)	11 (23.4)	1 (2.1)	23 (48.9)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
	Sachiko						S			
Help me.	Adults	n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.7)	0 (0.0)	26 (96.3)	27 (100.0)
	Classmates	n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	2 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	44 (93.6)	47 (100.0)
	Sachiko								S	

Note: [a]1= most polite; [b]7=least polite; [c]S=Sachiko. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2　Rank-ordered distribution: Extract from Table 1

Rank	Australian adults		Classmates		Sachiko
		%		%	
1[a]	Could you please	48.1	Could you please	46.8	Would you mind
	Would you mind	33.3	Would you mind	27.7	
			Can you please	19.1	
2	Could you please	48.1	Can you please	44.7	Could you please
	Can you please	33.3	Could you please	27.7	
3	Can you please	44.4	Would you mind	23.4	Can you please
	Would you mind	40.7	Could you please	19.1	
			Can you please	19.1	
4	Could you	37.0	Could you	31.9	Could you
	Help me please	33.3	Help me please	23.4	
			Would you mind	21.3	
5	Can you	55.6	Can you	44.7	Help me please
	Could you	33.3	Could you	38.3	
6	Help me please	51.9	Help me please	48.9	Can you
	Can you	29.6	Can you	34.0	
7[b]	Help me	96.3	Help me	93.6	Help me

Note: [a] 1＝most polite; [b] 7＝least polite

possible that if the number of participants were larger, the results might have been different.

As noted earlier, a notable difference between Sachiko and the others was found in *Can you help me* and *Help me please*. Only one adult and one classmate had the same ranking (the fifth) as Sachiko for *Help me please*, whereas about 50% of the adults and classmates rated it as the sixth. However, with *Can you help me* as the sixth Sachiko was in agreement with about one third of the adults and the classmates. Excerpt 2 in the follow-up interview refers to the reason of her choices:

Excerpt 2 (Follow-up interview)

M: Do you think "Help me, please" is more polite than "Can you help me" because of "please"?

S: Yeah. Didn't you know that, Mum?

M: I thought "Can you help me" was more polite than "Help me, please". With whom would you use "Help me, please"?

S: I rarely use it with anyone.

M: How about "Help me"?

S: I don't use it.

Excerpt 2 shows that Sachiko perceived *please* as a politeness marker to mitigate the force of the coerciveness of imperatives and placed *Help me, please* above *Can you help me*. It should be noted, however, that 33.3% of the adults and 23.4% of the classmates ranked *Help me, please* as the 4th, which is even higher than Sachiko's rating of the utterance in politeness.

3.2. Strategies, perspectives and the use of *please*

3.2.1. Main strategies

Definitions of the three major levels of directness were taken from Blum-Kulka (1989, pp. 46–47) but were somewhat simplified. Examples of each category were extracted from the classmates' responses in the present data.

1. Direct:

   The most direct, explicit level realized by requests which are syntactically marked as, for example, imperatives, or other verbal means that name the act as a request, such as performatives.

   Give me that pencil.

   I want that book, Mum.

2. Conventionally indirect:

   Strategies that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given culture.

   Could you please pass me that book?

   Can I please have a pencil?

3. Hints (Nonconventionally indirect):

   The open-ended group of indirect strategies that realize requests either by partial reference to the object or element needed for the implementation of the act or by reliance on contextual clues.

   Have you got a pencil?

   Where are the pencils?

Tables 3 and 4 display the distribution of main strategies by Sachiko and her classmates, indicating that with all the hearers in both scenarios, asking for a pencil and asking to pass a book, conventional indirectness was the most frequently used main strategy type by the classmates and that all of Sachiko's responses were also in this category. The results accord with Blum-Kulka's findings (1989, p. 47) with Australian English, which indicated overwhelming preference for conventional indirectness (82.4%). Hints rarely occurred in the present data. Finally, very few direct strategies appeared and they were mostly used with "mother" and "friend".

Table 3 Distribution of main request strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking for a pencil

	Main strategies			
	Direct	Conventionally indirect	Hint	
Hearer	Classmates (n)	Classmates (n)	Classmates (n)	Total
Teacher	0	47	0	47
Friend's mother	0	45	2	47
Mother	3	43	1	47
Friend	2	43	1	46[a]

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds. [a]One classmate gave no response to "Friend".

Table 4 Distribution of main request strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking to pass a book

	Main strategies			
	Direct	Conventionally indirect	Hint	
Hearer	Classmates (n)	Classmates (n)	Classmates (n)	Total
Teacher	0	47	0	47
Friend's mother	2	45	0	47
Mother	8	39	0	47
Friend	6	41	0	47

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds.

3.2.2. Subtypes of conventional indirect strategies

The majority of the classmates and Sachiko used conventional indirectness for each situation. In order to further explore the use of conventional strategies by Sachiko and her classmates, Tables 5 and 6 displays the distribution of subtypes of conventional indirect strategies used by Sachiko and her classmates with each hearer in the two scenarios. Tables 5 and 6 indicate both Sachiko and the majority of her classmates relied on the use of *could* and *can*. Close examination of their use of *could* and *can* in both scenarios shows that the most frequently used subtype by both Sachiko and her classmates with "teacher" (highest status) was *could you (I)*, and with "mother" (high status)

and "friend" (equal status) it was *can you (I)*. With "friend's mother" (higher status), however, Sachiko's choice was *can you (I)*, while the classmates' most frequently used subtype was *could you (I)* in the pencil scenario. In the book scenario, number of the classmates' responses between *could you (I)* (N＝19) and *can you (I)* (N＝18) was about the same. The following are examples of each subtype taken from classmates' responses.

Could you (I)
Could you pass me a book?
Can you (I)
Can I use that pencil?
May I
May I have a pencil?
Would you (I)
Would you pass me that book please?
Would you mind
Would you mind lending me a pencil?
Do you have with a qualification[2]
Do you have a pencil I could use?

Would you mind hardly occurred in the classmates' data: for both scenarios together there were only four. This indicates that the classmates normally do not use *Would you mind*. As discussed in 3.1, Sachiko said in the follow-up interview (Excerpt 1) that she did not use this utterance herself but heard me say it to others. This accords with very few occurrence of this utterance in the classmates' data.

[2] This is different from "Do you have a pencil?" which was categorized as a hint.

Table 5 Distribution of subtypes of conventional indirect strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking for a pencil

	could you (I)	can you (I)	may I	would you (I)	would you mind	do you have with a qualification	
	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	
Hearer	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total (%)
Teacher	21 (44.7)	15 (31.9)	8 (17.0)	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.3)	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	20 (44.4)	11 (24.4)	9 (20.0)	3 (6.7)	1 (2.2)	1 (2.2)	45 (99.9)
Mother	14 (32.6)	23 (53.5)	3 (7.0)	2 (4.7)	1 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	43 (100.1)
Friend	15 (34.9)	20 (46.5)	4 (9.3)	2 (4.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.7)	43 (100.1)

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds. Totals may not add to 100% clue to rounding.

Table 6 Distribution of subtypes of conventional indirect strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking to pass a book

	could you (I)	can you (I)	may I	would you (I)	would you mind	do you have with a qualification	
	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	
Hearer	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total (%)
Teacher	22 (46.8)	20 (42.6)	4 (8.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	19 (42.2)	18 (40.0)	4 (8.9)	4 (8.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	45 (100.0)
Mother	13 (33.3)	23 (59.0)	2 (5.1)	1 (2.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	39 (100.0)
Friend	12 (29.3)	20 (48.8)	7 (17.1)	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	41 (100.0)

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds.

3.2.3. Perspectives

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p. 19) distinguished the following four different perspectives.

1. *Speaker-oriented*: Focus is on the role of the agent (e.g., Can I have it?)
2. *Hearer-oriented*: Focus is on the role of the recipient (e.g., Can you do it?)

Or

To avoid the issue

3. *Inclusive* (e.g., Can we start cleaning now?)
4. *Impersonal* (e.g., It needs to be cleaned.)

For the analysis of the present data, *inclusive* was not dealt with, since it did not appear in the data. Tables 7 and 8 display the distribution of perspectives of indirect strategies by Sachiko and her classmates. This analysis includes both conventional indirect strategies and hints.

The scenario of asking for a pencil (Table 7) showed the classmates' overwhelming preference for *speaker-oriented* perspective to all the hearers (79.5–85.1%). Sachiko's choice was the same with that of her classmates. In contrast, the scenario of asking to pass a book (Table 8) showed that the choices by the classmates were overall more *hearer-oriented* than *speaker-oriented*. Sachiko's choice was also *hearer-oriented*.

The different results between the two scenarios may have to do with the different goals of the request. Although both are requests for goods, in asking to pass a book the action of the recipient is emphasized more, whereas asking for a pencil does not necessarily involve the action of the recipient. It could be a request for permission to use a pencil on the desk. This is consistent with Achiba (2003), which showed that requests for goods tended to be *speaker-oriented* and that requests for initiation of action tended to be *hearer-oriented*.

Interestingly, however, in asking "mother" and "friend" to pass a book, the frequency of choice between the two perspectives was similar. According to Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), "choice of perspective affects social meaning; since requests are inherently imposing, avoidance to name the hearer as actor can reduce the form's level of coerciveness." (p. 19). The participants in Blum-Kulka et al. were adults. Does this apply to primary school students? If it did apply to children, why did many of the classmates choose the speaker-oriented perspective, which is less imposing, to "mother" and "friend"? These children may not have developed this dimension of sociopragmatics yet. It would be an empirical question which has to be explored.

Table 7 Distribution of perspectives of indirect strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking for a pencil

	Hearer-oriented	Speaker-oriented	Impersonal	
	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	
Hearer	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total (%)
Teacher	9 (19.1)	38 (80.9)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	6 (12.8)	40 (85.1)	1 (2.1)	47 (100.0)
Mother	8 (18.2)	35 (79.5)	1 (2.3)	44 (100.0)
Friend	7 (15.9)	37 (84.1)	0 (0.0)	44 (100.0)

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds.

Table 8 Distribution of perspectives of indirect strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking to pass a book

	Hearer-oriented	Speaker-oriented	Impersonal	
	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates	
Hearer	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Total (%)
Teacher	34 (72.3)	13 (27.7)	0 (0.0)	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	30 (66.7)	15 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	45 (100.0)
Mother	21 (53.8)	18 (46.2)	0 (0.0)	39 (100.0)
Friend	21 (51.2)	20 (48.8)	0 (0.0)	41 (100.0)

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds.

3.2.4. The use of *please*

Please is one of the modifiers to reduce the impositive force of a request. It functions as a politeness marker. L1 English-speaking children seem to be socialized into the use of *please* by their parents who prompt them to say *please* when they fail to do so.

Please also functions as a request marker to make requests more explicit. For instance, without *please* "Can you open the window?" can be a request or a question to ask the ability to open the window.

Tables 9 and 10 display the distribution of the use of *please* by Sachiko and her classmates. In the scenario of asking for a pencil (Table 9), the frequency of *please* for the classmates increased with hearers' status, with teacher (highest status) receiving *please* 89.4% of the time and the classmates (equal status) receiving it 52.2% of the time. The variation in the frequency in the use of *please* reflected changes in status. In the scenario of asking to pass a book (Table 10), the similar tendency was observed for the classmates except for the same frequencies to "teacher" and "friend's mother" (72.3%). The variation according to status indicates the classmates used *please* not as a request marker but as a politeness marker. Sachiko also perceived *please* as a politeness marker as evidenced in the follow-up interview (Excerpt 2). This may indicate the classmates' and Sachiko's sociopragmatic awareness. Sachiko used *please* with

Table 9 Distribution of *please* for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking for a pencil

		Classmates	
Hearer	Sachiko	n (%)	Total (%)
Teacher	1	42 (89.4)	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	1	37 (78.7)	47 (100.0)
Mother	1	26 (55.3)	47 (100.0)
Friend	0	24 (52.2)	46[a] (100.0)

Note: "1" = appears in Sachiko's response; "0" = does not appear in the response.
[a]One elassmate gave no response to "Friend".

Table 10 Distribution of *please* for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking to pass a book

Hearer	Sachiko	Classmates n (%)	Total (%)
Teacher	1	34 (72.3)	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	1	34 (72.3)	47 (100.0)
Mother	1	32 (68.1)	47 (100.0)
Friend	0	27 (57.4)	47 (100.0)

Note: "1"＝appears in Sachiko's response; "0"＝does not appear in the response.

"teacher", "friend's mother" and "mother" but not with"friend". She elaborated on this in the follow-up interview, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.2.5. Request strategies

For the second analysis, different dimensions of a request i.e., main strategies, subtypes of conventional indirect strategies, perspectives, and the use of *please* have been examined separately. This section now discusses request strategies including all these dimensions. Tables 11 (See p. 263) and 12 (See p. 264) display the distribution of request strategies produced by Sachiko and her classmates.

The following are examples of typical choices to each hearer which appeared in Tables 11 and 12 and includes a discussion.

With "teacher", the highest status hearer, *Could I please* and *Could you please* were typically used both by the classmates and Sachiko, in asking for a pencil and in asking to pass a book, respectively.

To teacher

(Asking for a pencil)

Could I please use that pencil? (Classmates)

Could I please have a pencil? (Classmates)

Could I please have the pencil? (Sachiko)

(Asking to pass a book)

Could you please pass me that book? (Classmates)

Could you please pass me that book? (Sachiko)

With "friend's mother", the higher status hearer, the classmates used most frequently *Could I please* and *Could you please*, in the pencil scenario and the book scenario, respectively. On the other hand, Sachiko used *Can I please* in the pencil scenario and *Can you please* in the book scenario.

To friend's mother

(Asking for a pencil)

Could I please have a pencil? (Highest frequency; Classmates)

Can I please have a pencil? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can I please have the pencil? (Sachiko)

(Asking to pass a book)

Could you please pass me that book? (Highest frequency; Classmates)

Can you please pass me a book? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can you please pass me that book? (Sachiko)

In Excerpt 3 in the follow-up interview, Sachiko explained clearly how she decided when she made requests to her friends' mothers:

Excerpt 3 (Follow-up interview)

M: Your friend's mother is sitting close to a book on the table. You want her to pass you the book. What would you say to her?

S: If it's Claire, I'd say, "Could you please pass me that book?" I'd use that with my teachers, too. But if it's Joanna, I sometimes say, "Can you

please pass me that book?" because I know her very well.

Both Claire and Joanna were Sachiko's classmates' mothers. Sachiko interacted with Claire when Sachiko visited her home to play with her daughter and when Claire came to our house to pick up her daughter after the children played at our place. Therefore, Sachiko knew Claire. As for Joanna, she was Sachiko's best friend's mother and she was often at our place with her daughters. She took Sachiko to her country house along with her children to spend a couple of weekends. In addition, Joanna was the youngest of all the mothers in Sachiko's class. Excerpt 3 from the follow-up interview illustrates that Sachiko took not only status relations but also the degree of familiarity into consideration when she answered my question in the interview. Sachiko may well have been thinking of Joanna in mind, when she gave her response, "Can you please pass me that book?", to her "friend's mother" in the questionnaire. Excerpt 3 seems to evidence some sociopragmatic awareness on the part of Sachiko.

With "mother", the high status hearer, in the pencil scenario, *Can I please* was typically used by both the classmates and Sachiko. In the book scenario, *Can I please* was also most frequently used by the classmates, while Sachiko's choice was *Can you please*. However, since the actual numbers of *Can I please* and *Can you please* were 10 and 8 respectively, there may be little difference between these two.

To mother
(Asking for a pencil)
Can I please have a pencil? (Classmates)
Can I please have the pencil? (Sachiko)

(Asking to pass a book)

Can I have that book please? (Highest frequency; Classmates)

Could you please pass me that book? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can you please pass me that book? (3rd highest; Classmates)

Can you please pass me that book? (Sachiko)

With "friend", the equal status hearer, in the pencil scenario, the classmates' most frequently used strategy was *Can I please*, whereas Sachiko's choice was *Can I*, which was the classmates' second most frequently used substrategy, along with *Could I please*. However, again, the first and second most frequently used strategies were similar in number, 11 and 9 respectively. Therefore, there may not be actual variation between these choices of strategy. In the book scenario, however, Sachiko's choice was *Can you*, which was only the sixth highest strategy used by the classmates, although these six different strategies used by the classmates are similar in number (3–7) to each other.

To friend

(Asking for a pencil)

Can I please have a pencil? (Highest frequency; Classmates)

Could I please have a pencil? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can I use that pencil? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can I have the pencil? (Sachiko)

(Asking to pass a book)

Could you please pass me that book? (Highest frequency; Classmates)

Can you please pass me a book? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can I have that book? (2nd highest; Classmates)

Can I please have a book? (4th highest; Classmates)

May I have a book please? (5th highest; Classmates)

Can you pass me that book? (6th highest; Classmates)

Can you pass me that book? (Sachiko)

In Excerpt 4 in the follow-up interview, Sachiko made clear about her choice to "friend":

Excerpt 4 (Follow-up interview)

M: Your friend is sitting close to a book on the table. You want her or him to pass you the book. What would you say to her or him?

S: I'd say, "Can you pass me that book?" to my friends a lot of the time. But I'd also say it with *please*, like "Can you please pass me that book?"

M: When would you say "Can you please pass me that book?" then?

S: Among friends, if I'm talking to someone who is a little older than I am, for instance, Liz who is in the fifth grade, I'd say, "Can you please pass me that book?" but to someone in my grade, I'd say "Can you pass me that book?" without *please*.

Liz and her family lived in our neighborhood. Her mother and I took turns in taking Liz and Sachiko to school and picking them up after school. Although they were friends, Liz was an upper class student: Liz was in the fifth grade, two years above Sachiko, when the interview was conducted.

It is interesting to note that she made her own judgment as to who she should use "Can you please pass me that book?" and "Can you pass me that book?" with. Excerpt 4 shows that the interlocutor's age was a factor for her to decide what strategy to be deployed with her friends.

In asking "friend" to pass a book, more than half of the classmates used *please* in their utterances (57.4%, See Table 10 for the distribution of *please*).

Table 11 Distribution of request strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking for a pencil

Hearer	Classmates' responses	
	Request strategies	n (%)
Teacher	Could I+please	17 (36.2)
	Can I+please	10 (21.3)
	May I+please	5 (10.6)
	Could you+please	4 (8.5)
	Can you+please	4 (8.5)
	May I	3 (6.4)
	Other	4 (8.5)
	Total	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	Could I+please	19 (40.4)
	Can I+please	9 (19.1)
	May I+please	5 (10.6)
	May I	4 (8.5)
	Do you have	2 (4.3)
	Other	8 (17.0)
	Total	47 (99.9)
Mother	Can I+please	14 (29.8)
	Could I+please	6 (12.8)
	Can I	6 (12.8)
	Could I	5 (10.6)
	Could you please	3 (6.4)
	Can you please	3 (6.4)
	May I	3 (6.4)
	Imperative	3 (6.4)
	Other	4 (8.5)
	Total	47 (100.1)
Friend	Can I+please	11 (23.9)
	Can I	9 (19.6)
	Could I+please	9 (19.6)
	Could I	3 (6.5)
	Do you have	3 (6.5)
	Could you please	2 (4.3)
	May I+please	2 (4.3)
	May I	2 (4.3)
	Other	5 (10.9)
	Total[a]	46 (99.9)

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds;
"Other" includes individual responses for different strategies.
[a]One classmate gave no response to "Friend". Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 12 Distribution of request strategies for Sachiko and her classmates: Asking to pass a book

Hearer	Classmates' responses	
	Request strategies	n (%)
Teacher	Could you+please	17 (36.2)
	Can you+please	9 (19.1)
	Can you	5 (10.6)
	Can I+please	4 (8.5)
	Coud I	3 (6.4)
	Can I	2 (4.3)
	May I+please	2 (4.3)
	Other	5 (10.6)
	Total	47 (100.0)
Friend's mother	Could you+please	13 (27.7)
	Can you+please	9 (19.1)
	Can I+please	5 (10.6)
	Could you	3 (6.4)
	May I+please	3 (6.4)
	Could I	2 (4.3)
	Can I	2 (4.3)
	Can you	2 (4.3)
	Would you+please	2 (4.3)
	Other	6 (12.8)
	Total	47 (100.2)
Mother	Can I+please	10 (21.3)
	Could you+please	9 (19.1)
	Can you+please	8 (17.0)
	Can I	3 (6.4)
	Imperative+please	3 (6.4)
	Imperative	3 (6.4)
	Could I	2 (4.3)
	Can you	2 (4.3)
	I want	2 (4.3)
	Other	5 (10.6)
	Total	47 (100.1)
Friend	Could you+please	7 (14.9)
	Can you+please	6 (12.8)
	Can I	6 (12.8)
	Can I+please	5 (10.6)
	May I+please	4 (8.5)
	Can you	3 (6.4)
	Imperative+please	3 (6.4)
	Imperative	3 (6.4)
	Could you	2 (4.3)
	Could I	2 (4.3)
	May I	2 (4.3)
	Other	4 (8.5)
	Total	47 (100.2)

Note: The underlined number also indicates where Sachiko responds;
"Other" includes individual responses for different strategies. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

From this, it can be said that the use of *please* with "friend" would be a norm. Then why did Sachiko make a distinction in the use between "Can you pass me that book?" and "Can you please pass me that book?" as she explained in the follow-up interview? It can be speculated that her pragmatic behavior with her friends might have been based on a Japanese pragmatic behavior observed from primary school through university in Japan. Students in Japan normally use more polite language with their seniors than with their peers or juniors. If it is the case, her response to "friend" in the questionnaire can be explained as a pragmatic transfer from Japanese.

4. Summary and Conclusion

This research set out to explore one L2 child's sociopragmatice awareness. Any L2 learner's pragmatic behavior is shaped by other people surrounding the learner, including adults and other children. Therefore, the first analysis in this study compared Sachiko's perceptions of politeness with those of adult speakers of Australian English and her classmates.

For Australian adults, "Could you please help me?", "Would you mind helping me" and "Can you please help me?" were the three most polite strategies. This was followed by "Could you help me?", "Can you help me?" and "Help me, please." Lastly, "Help me" was ranked as the least polite. Sachiko and her classmates had near similar results with the adults.

The first research question examined the extent to which Sachiko's sociopragmatic awareness is similar to her L1 English-speaking classmates. The results from the questionnaire from Sachiko and her classmates were remarkably similar in their use of strategies with perspectives and *please* to "teacher", "friend's mother" and "mother". However, in their utterances to "friend" in the book scenario the classmates attached *please* to their utterances while Sachiko did not. A follow-up interview on this point clarified that

Sachiko distinguished between her peers with whom she did not use *please*, and her seniors with whom she did. This fine distinction she made could be explained as a pragmatic transfer from Japanese.

In the study, findings from the interview were referred to whenever relevant. The follow-up interview was very useful to identify possible reasons why Sachiko chose to respond as she did. In addition, it indicated evidence of "conscious awareness" (Schmidt 1993) on her part.

The second research question asked whether or not there was evidence of the learner's sociopragmatic awareness at the end of 17 month observation period. Taken together, the findings from questionnaires as well as the follow-up interview provided ample evidence of her sociopragmatic awareness. However, Sachiko did not have the full understanding of sociopragramtic norms of the Australian speech community. She seemed to be still on the developmental path.

The present study is about one young learner's sociopragmatic awareness. Further studies with other learners are needed to uncover L2 children's sociopragmatic awareness. Therefore, the conclusions are presented as points of departure for future study and discussion.

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Keywords

sociopragamtic awareness, second language acquisition, request strategies

Appendix A. Questionnaire used with the adults for the first analysis

I. Please write or circle the following.

1. Your nationality _____

2. Your variety of English (e.g., Australian English, American English, British English, or Canadian English, etc.)
_____

3. Circle your age.
20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s

4. Circle your gender.
male female

II. Please rank the following utterances in order of politeness
(1 = most polite, 7 = least polite).

_____ Help me, please.

_____ Could you please help me?

_____ Help me.

_____ Can you please help me?

_____ Would you mind helping me?

_____ Can you help me?

_____ Could you help me?

Appendix B. Questionnaire used with Sachiko and her classmates for the first analysis

1. Please circle the correct one.

I am a	BOY,	(GIRL.)
I am in	(GRADE 3)	GRADE4.

2. Which do you think is the most polite and which is the least polite? In the spaces, rank the sentences in order of politeness. Number 1 is the one you think is the most polite. Number 7 is the least polite. (Number every space!)

__5__ Help me, please.

__2__ Could you please help me?

__7__ Help me.

__3__ Can you please help me?

__1__ Would you mind helping me?

__6__ Can you help me?

__4__ Could you help me?

Appendix C. Questionnaire used with Sachiko and her classmates for the second analysis

3. You want to ask for a pencil from each of these people. What would you say? Write a sentence on the line.

1) (To your teacher)

Could I please have the pencil?

2) (To your friend's mother)

Can I please have the pencil?

3) (To your mother)

Can I please have the pencil?

4) (To your friend)

Can I have the pencil?

4. You want each of these people to pass you a book. What would you say? Write a sentence on the line.

1) (To your teacher)

Could you please pass me that book?

2) (To your friend's mother)

Can you please pass me that book?

3) (To your mother)

Can you please pass me that book?

4) (To your friend)

Can you pass me that book?

Thank you for your cooperation!